



AESTHETICS AND LITERATURE IN KHALED HOSSINI'S NOVEL A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS

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Abstract

Khaled Hosseini is a very prominent Afghan born American writer and a Physician. He has written three novels and one short story collection. All of his works has depicted in the background of Afghanistan. All the three novels were in the New York Times' best seller list. Among his writings I have chosen his second novel A Thousand Splendid Suns for my paper through the main character of Mariam. This novel has divided into four parts. It deals with the story of Mariam and Laila, even though they belong to different culture, family, generation and age, they shared their lives together in the same household. Once Mariam was going in the street, she saw the shops where the people are buying different things like flowers, herbs, dresses and also children were played marbles in circle drawn in dust. One day Rasheed bought a dark maroon silk shawl with beaded and edges embroidered with gold thread. It was really a beautiful gift told by Mariam. This novel reflects the living style of Afghan women. While we read this novel, it gives lots of memories and things in the Muslim religion. Hosseini beautifully explained the strict rules and regulation of the Afghanistan especially for women. This story covers the three generation of people from Afghanistan, though they belong to various area of native land, culture, language and decades apart, the author united them as a single family. Along the aesthetics of Afghanistan, Hosseini narrates this story as a Physician in many ways. His language and art of storytelling is really wonderful through the characters and events. In this novel, he explores his own thoughts and ideas about his own native land of Afghanistan. He recollects his childhood memories and the natural elements of Afghan culture. He beautifully constructs the story of the ordinary people in the Afghan society during the Taliban regime.

Key Words: Aesthetics, Afghan Culture, Gender, Generations, Family

Introduction

Khaled Hosseini is one of the most famous writers of Afghanistan. He is a Physician by profession. He has written three novels and one short story collection. All the three novels were in the New York Times' best seller list. *The Kite Runner* is his debut novel. This is in the form of Semi – autobiography. Second novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is such a wonderful life story of two Afghan women. Third novel *And*

The Mountain Echoed reflects the life of different characters in each chapter of the book.

This paper has dealt with Hosseini's second novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* in the sense of aesthetic writings of the author through the main character of Mariam. Aesthetics is one of the branches of philosophy. It associated with the study of beauty. The term aesthetics comes from the Greek word which was coined by Alexander

Gottlieb Baumgarten in 1735. He introduced that term aesthetics to mean “the science of how things are known via the senses” (1). In poetry, short stories, novels, non-fiction, authors use a variety of techniques to appeal to our aesthetic values. Mariam was a young girl when the novel begins. This novel has divided into four parts. The first part deals with the life of Mariam. The second part of the novel deals with the life of Laila. The third part deals with the relationship between Mariam and Laila. And the final part of the novel deals with the relationship between Laila and her husband Tariq. Hosseini wrote in his novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns* about Mariam’s childhood memories in the beginning as,

One of Mariam’s earliest memories was the sound of a wheelbarrow’s squeaky iron wheels bouncing over rocks. The wheelbarrow came once a month, filled with rice, flour, tea, sugar, oil, soap, toothpaste. It was pushed by Mariam’s half brothers, usually Muhsin and Ramin, sometimes Ramin and Farhad. Up the dirt track, over rocks and pebbles, around holes and bushes, the boys took turns pushing until they reached the stream. There, wheelbarrow had to be emptied and items hand-carried across the water. (13)

In the first part of the novel, Hosseini wrote many memorable things of Mariam’s life with her mother Nana and her father Jalil. Her father Jalil was a wealthy man, who had three wives and nine children except Nana and her daughter Mariam. He was explained about the cartoon film to Mariam while he met her in Nana’s house. She liked to see that cartoon film with her half brothers and half sisters in the theatre. “Mariam remembered him telling her that on the screen a human face looked as big as a house, that when a car crashed up there you felt the metal twisting in your bones. She pictured herself sitting in the private balcony seats, lapping at ice cream, alongside

her siblings and Jalil. It’s what I want, Mariam said” (26- 27).

After the death of Nana, Mariam went to Jalil’s house. She walked on a maroon carpet with a repeating blue and yellow octagonal pattern. She had a separate room in the upstairs. The room had a bed with a green-flowered blanket knit in a tightly woven, honeycomb design. The curtains, pulled back to reveal the garden below, matched the blanket. On one of the shelves, Mariam saw a collection of identical wooden dolls, arranged in a line in order of decreasing size. She had to use bathroom down the hall, otherwise she stayed in the room. (39) Hosseini has beautifully expressed the aesthetic sense of his writings through the character of Mariam. As a young girl, Mariam liked many things in Jalil’s house those she didn’t see before. Mariam impressively watched the gardener those who were always trimming the bushes. All servants were rushed in their works. She was watching Jalil’s coming inside and going outside of the gate. She was very excited to watch all those things in that big house. It was her dream while she was living with her mother Nana.

After the death of Nana, Jalil’s wives told him to arrange a marriage for Mariam. They searched a suitor for her. Immediately they arranged a Nikka for her with Rasheed who was too older than Mariam, for him, Mariam was a second wife. His first wife was no more; she has passed away when she delivered a boy baby. His son has drowned in the water. So he was living alone now, he had a shop in Kabul. All are convinced Mariam for this Nikka. In that morning, Mariam was given a long-sleeved, dark green dress to wear over white cotton trousers. There was a long brown table with a bowl of sugar coated almond candy, a Koran, a green veil and a mirror. In that mirror, Mariam saw her own face first, the archless, unshapely eyebrows, the flat hair. Her chin was

coarse and had a dull spotty appearance. In the mirror, Mariam had her first glimpse of Rasheed: the big, square, ruddy face; the hooked nose; the flushed cheeks that gave the impression of sly cheerfulness; the watery, bloodshot eyes; the crowded teeth, the bushy eyebrows; salt-and-pepper hair. This is the face of my husband, Mariam thought. (53)

In that occasion Mariam and Rasheed were exchanged the gold band for the bond of marriage. It was so beautiful for her hand. Mulla told that it was the contract of their new life. They have started their journey by multicolored bus. Next day morning they have reached Kabul. After few days of their wedding, Rasheed came with a brown color paper bag. He has lifted sky blue color burqa from that bag. Mariam didn't wear burqa yet. She has worn that burqa and practiced to walk in her room and inside of the house. She felt too hot while she worn the burqa. Rasheed explained to Mariam about the needful of burqa that:

I have customers, Mariam, men, who bring their wives to my shop. The women came uncovered; they talk to me directly, look me in the eye without shame. They wear makeup and skirt that shows their knees. Sometimes they even put their feet in front of me, the women do, for measurements, and their husbands stand there and watch. They allow it. They think nothing of a stranger touching their wives' bare feed! They think they're bring modern men, intellectuals, on account of their education, I suppose. They don't see that they're spoiling their own nang and namoos, their honor and pride. (69)

Rasheed and Mariam went to Kabul city to visit the shops. She worn burqa, Rasheed helped her to put up. She felt comforting with it. On the way to market place, they saw many shops and things, he explained each and everything whichever they saw in that place. Rasheed told the various names of the buildings and vehicle Company and

its native land. He bought her ice cream from the street vendor. That was the first time, Mariam had eaten, "she devoured the entire bowl, the crushed-pistachio topping, the tiny rice noodles at the bottom. She marveled at the bewitching texture, the lapping sweetness of it" (72).

They walked on that narrow street called chicken street but there was no chicken shop. The street was lined with small shops and stalls. "They strolled past carpet shops, handicraft shops, pastry shops, flower shops, and shops that sold suits for men and dresses for women, and, in them, behind lace curtains, Mariam saw young girls sewing buttons and ironing collars" (73). Rasheed greeted everyone met in those shops. He asked her to wait for him outside of the embroidery shop. She was waited in the crowded sidewalk for him.

Rasheed came nearby Mariam and he was tapping her shoulder and gave her something. Surprisingly she has opened that, it was a beautiful maroon silk shawl with beaded and golden thread embroidered edges. That was very beautiful shawl, she loved it most. She felt, it was a real gift, really wonderful. In the time of Ramadan, For the first time in her life, Mariam saw how the sighting of the new crescent moon could transform an entire city, alter its rhythm and mood. She noticed a drowsy hush overtaking Kabul. Traffic became languid, scant, even quiet. Shops emptied. Restaurants turned off their lights, closed their doors. Mariam saw no smokers on the streets, no cups of tea steaming from window ledges. And at *iftar*, when the sun dipped in the west and the cannon fired from the Shir Darwaza mountain, the city broke its fast, and so did Mariam, with bread and a date, tasting for the first time in her fifteen years sweetness of sharing in a communal experience. (77)

Mariam recalled her childhood days of Eid celebration with Nana and

Jalil. They sat together to drink tea and Jalil gave her gifts along with sweets and candies. Mullah also came to give her gifts, boiled eggs, chocolate candy for Eid. She enjoyed those days as a child very much. Now as a woman, she celebrated the special occasion with the gifts of her husband. Once Mariam was going in the street, she saw the shops where the people are buying different things like flowers, herbs, dresses and also children were played marbles in circle drawn in dust. Hosseini had beautifully pictured those things of Mariam memories together with her present occasion.

Hosseini expressed many events of Afghan society especially in Muslim society of Kabul. Mariam loved her life journey of her childhood and also her marriage life with Rasheed. She saw many new things when she entered into Jalil's house as a daughter, whereas she has learnt many new things when she entered into the city of Kabul with Rasheed as a wife. He taught her many lessons of life. He gave a lot of gifts to Mariam. He surprised her in many ways. She has eaten new foods ever tasted. According to Hosseini, life of Mariam was a pleasant moment with her mother Nana. She missed her only after her death.

Hosseini wrote innovate way of portraits the characters in his novel. Among all, Mariam was a special as a main character of the novel. She had met lots of new things in each and every stages of her life. The author aesthetically told the story of Mariam in his second novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. He realized that character when he wrote. Even, he expressed the psychological views of a child, her taste of foods, surprises of gifts, interesting of things, etc.,. Mariam was a great example of a woman in Kabul, Afghanistan. She followed the strict rules and regulations of Islam after her marriage through the guidance of her husband Rasheed. We enjoyed the story

of Mariam very well when we read it. Hosseini has wonderfully written those things and expressed his ideas, memories of his native land through the characters of his novels. His language and art of storytelling is really wonderful through the characters and events.

In this novel, he explores his own thoughts and ideas about his own native land of Afghanistan. He recollects his childhood memories and the natural elements of Afghan culture. The image of Afghanistan still plays the greatest role in Hosseini's novels. He beautifully constructs the story of the ordinary people in the Afghan society during the Taliban regime.

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